



Women, Race and Class

Angela Davis is well known but hard to summarise. She is certainly a scholar. She is also a holder of the Lenin Peace Prize from the Soviet Union, and she was twice a US Vice-Presidential candidate on behalf of the CPUSA. *[The image is a Cuban poster for Angela].*

[This link](#) takes you to an interview that Angela Davis did with Gary Younge of the Guardian (London) in 2007, during a trip which also took her to Johannesburg, as recorded by the [CU here](#).

[This link](#) takes you to the Angela Davis page on Wikipedia, where, as usual, there are more links, including those at the bottom of the page.

Chapter 13 from Angela Davis's 1981 book, *Women, Race and Class*, linked below, is to a large extent a polemic against the Wages for Housework Movement of that time, led by Mariarosa Dalla Costa in Italy.

Davis tackles the matter of housework first, arguing for a communist solution to the drudgery of child care, domestic cleaning, food preparation, and laundry.

She shows that the current situation of women is historically recent in origin, and that the repression of women coincides in historical development of human society with the appearance of private property, quoting Engels' "[Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State](#)". Davis reports on her 1973 interaction with the Masai people of Tanzania, where there was still division of labour between the sexes that was "complementary as opposed to hierarchical," according to Davis.

Davis recounts, in her own way, the nature of the capitalist wages system, where money is only paid for the survival or continued availability of labour power, and nothing at all is paid for the expropriated product of labour. Davis also records aspects of the South African apartheid system of exploitation, which was still in full force at that time.

In her concluding paragraph Davis says: "The only significant steps toward ending domestic slavery have in fact been taken in the existing socialist countries." In other words, wages for housework under capitalism is an ineffective

gimmick; the real solution to women's problems in society can only come from changing society's relations of production, as a whole.

The Communist University is suggesting that the democratic organisation of women in the same kind of way as workers are organised, so that their organisation is a component of democracy and is not outside of democracy, is the only way that women can form a collective purpose.

Wages for housework is not a major issue in South Africa at the present time.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Working-Class Perspective on Housework, Davis, Women, Race and Class, 1981.](#)
- To download any of the CU courses in PDF files [please click here.](#)